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STATE FOR NEA/ARN, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, INR/NESA, R/MR,  
I/GNEA, B/BXN, B/BRN, NEA/PPD, NEA/IPA FOR ALTERMAN  
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LONDON FOR GOLDRICH  
PARIS FOR O'FRIEL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR JO](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON THE MIDDLE EAST

#### Summary

-- Majority of commentaries in papers published today, April 21, praise the King's decision to postpone his meeting with President Bush in view of recent U.S. statements in relation to Palestinian-Israeli issues. The decision is seen as "bold", "wise" and in keeping with pan-Arab and Jordanian interests. The lead story today highlights Jordan's official spokesperson Asma Khader briefing about the shootout incident yesterday between Jordanian security forces and four terrorist suspects in a part of Amman, which resulted in the killing of the four suspects. Another lead story in all papers highlights the King's return to the Kingdom and the Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher's talks with Secretary Powell in Washington vis--vis the recent

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U.S. statements, focusing on Muasher's comments that he is "reassured" about the U.S. stand towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Reports on continued developments and violence in Iraq are highlighted on the front pages of all papers today, but have taken a backseat to domestic reporting.

#### Editorial Commentary

-- "Times of divergence"

Centrist, influential among the elite English daily the Jordan Times (04/21) editorializes: "His Majesty King Abdullah's decision to postpone his talks with U.S. President George Bush and return home was not simply wise. It demonstrates Jordan's astuteness. Washington's surprise endorsement of Israel's plan for a unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and okay on keeping some settlements in the West Bank, caused confusion.. With that quandary persisting, it was best to allow time for the situation to be sorted out first by Foreign minister Marwan Muasher. Although the United States and Jordan, at all levels, have maintained strong ties, there have and will be times when gut issues, such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the U.S. occupation of Iraq, present predicaments. This is one such time.. The message to the neo-conservatives in Washington is that friends should not be taken for granted. Washington must deal with its friends in the Arab world in order to understand the region."

-- "Jordan's reservations towards America's policy in the region"

Daily columnist Mohammad Amayreh writes on the op-ed page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (04/21): "His Majesty King Abdullah II chose to postpone his meeting with President Bush for next month and expressed his desire that the Foreign Minister continues talks with American officials vis--vis the peace process and the recent American statements. This is a clear Jordanian stand that indicates displeasure with the American policy in the region and reflects the desire to see a more balanced and more just policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict.. The royal move to show displeasure with the American policy is likely to witness further reactions, unless Washington reconsiders its policy, clarifies its position, and regains its required balance in the region, that is instead of going further in its support of Israeli stances, pledging more new promises to Sharon, and encouraging his terrorist and extremist policies. Such a Jordanian stand is worthy of appreciation and must be followed suit so that we could achieve a unified Arab stand vis--vis the American policy in the region. This is the only way to influence this policy in order to achieve the required balance under these difficult and delicate circumstances suffered by the Arab nation and

amidst very serious military and political developments in Palestine and Iraq."

-- "The Arabs and America"

Daily columnist Rakan Majali writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (04/21): "The King's decision to postpone his visit to Washington was wise and brave, and it expressed the highest levels of pan-Arab responsibility, national commitment and conviction that just peace is the foundation of all options, that peace is the only guarantee for uprooting terrorism, and that it is the correct base from which reform, change and development can be launched. We do not view this stand as one directed against the United States, but rather as a call for a genuine moment for reconsidering all prior positions and commitments by the United States and the international community towards the Palestinian cause."

-- "A necessary decision"

Daily columnist Urayb Rintawi writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (04/21): "The decision to postpone the Jordanian-American summit meeting was not neither an easy decision to make nor a hurried one. After all, the Jordanian-American relationship has a strategic nature and expands to include all economic, commercial, financial, military and security areas. Yet, the motives behind that postponement decision were very strong.. The region stands at a crossroads: Sharon's plan either becomes the beginning and the end, as Tel Aviv wants, or it becomes part of the roadmap, as Amman is calling for. This battle has not been concluded yet, and Bush's statements and guarantees are not the end of the road. As for Jordanian-American relations, I believe they are going through a state of coolness, but it is in nobody's interest, particularly Jordan's, to push it towards a crisis, as some people are calling for."

-- "The postponement circumstances"

Chief Editor Taher Udwan writes on the back page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (04/21): "It is well known that King Abdullah and the Egyptian President continue to place their trust in an American role for achieving just peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and they are working hard to go back to the negotiating table and the peace process. It was not appropriate or even friendly for Bush to give Sharon all that support and backing at a time when the Egyptian-American and the Jordanian-American summit meetings were due to take place and at a time when Sharon continues his policy of liquidating Palestinian leaders. The King asked to postpone the meeting and this is a genuine expression of the prevailing feelings of anger and resentment abound among the Jordanian, Palestinian and Arab people vis--vis these American stances, which could be described at the least as a major deviation towards recklessness about Arabs and their interests."

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